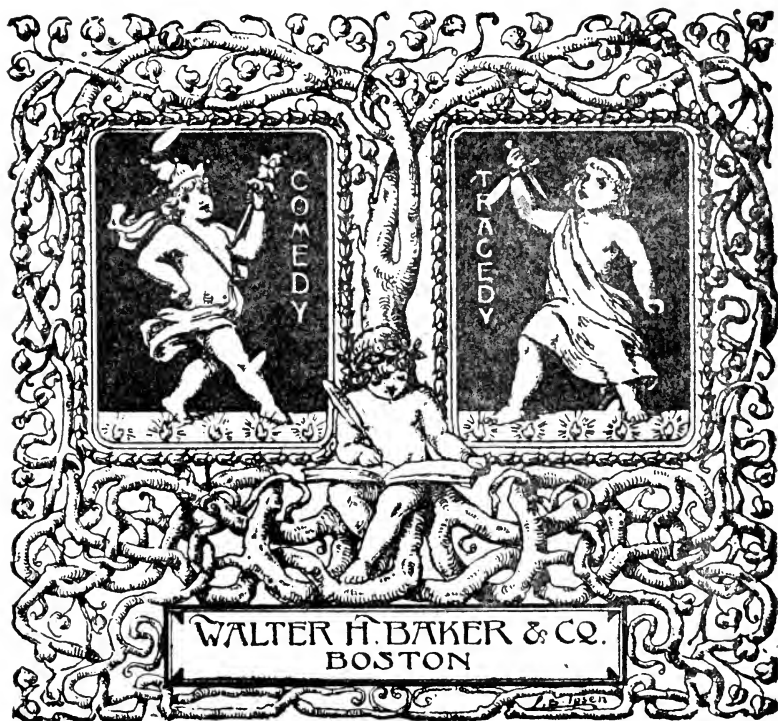


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# The First National Boot

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## CHARACTERS

"ISRY" EBBETTS, *owner of Hamden's Center Store.*

EDDY RIAS, *his clerk.*

ANDREW STRONG, *a mysterious stranger from Portland.*

FRANCESCA WILLETS } *members of Hamden's*

EDWINA BEMIS } *Reform League.*

ARCHENBACHUS HERODOTUS SNOOZE, *a member of Pinkum's Detective Agency.*

FOGGERTY YOUNG, *town constable.*

THOMAS RUSTAN, *a practical joker.*

SQUIRE PECKHAM, *chairman of the town council.*

FARMERS.

## SYNOPSIS

ACT I. The interior of Hamden's Center Store late Friday afternoon.

ACT II. The same, slightly before midnight.



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# The First National Boot

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## ACT I

SCENE.—*The scene opens in Hamden's Center Store, a combined hardware, grocery and dry-goods store. There are two entrances to the room, the first on left, leading supposedly to the storekeeper's own house, the other at center back leading to the porch. Through this door may be seen a view of the country. On the right of the main entrance is a small enclosed space marked "Post-office," with a window which may be opened when the postmaster gives out the mail; otherwise this is closed. Counters run perpendicular to the footlights, covered with various goods, behind which are shelves containing more. The walls are covered with pictures of famous men and game laws. In the center of the store is a small stove, about which there are several three-legged stools. Directly over these hangs one lonely rubber boot, suspended from which is a sign, reading "Good Luck."*

*(When the curtain rises, three farmers are discovered sitting about the stove. The storekeeper known as "ISRY" EBBETTS stands behind the counter left, smoking a corn-cob pipe.)*

FIRST FARMER. 'Tain't for nothing they are raisin' all this hulabaloo. I tell you they mean business.

SECOND FARMER (eyeing ISRY). You're right, Joe, and my wife told me t'other day, sort of confidential like, that they was a-going to make it right smart for the offenders.

ISRY. What be they up to, George? Any idea?

THIRD FARMER. They got spies.

ALL. Spies?

THIRD FARMER. Right, spies! Hired 'em from Boston. They say if this here town's prohibition, it's going to be pro-

hibition and so they hired a detective. At least, that's what I was told.

ALL. Well, I swan!

SECOND FARMER (*eyeing ISRY*). So we, representin' the official body of selectmen, Isry —

ISRY. Yes, I hear yuh! I hear yuh.

SECOND FARMER (*nervously*). We, representin' the selectmen of Hamden, thought that you—of course we don't want to interfere with your trade because, there's no gettin' round it, it's the best trade the town has—at least since it's gone prohibition. So we, representin' the selectmen, thought you'd better kind of lay low till the wimen's clubs kind of subside. Ain't that so, boys? (*He takes out watch.*)

FARMERS. Sure pop!

ISRY (*taking out watch*). Yes, I get yer meaning. But say, what do you think of Hamden's Social Reform League, Joe? What do you think?

FIRST FARMER (*taking out watch*). Pretty low, Isry, pretty low, but I reckon it won't last long. Say, ain't that train about due?

(*All regard watches.*)

ISRY (*scanning watch*). Yes, I guess she ought to be along pretty soon.

FIRST FARMER. She ought to toot now—no, I guess she's late.

ISRY. Late! I should say so. I've lived here for forty-eight years and she's only been on time twice.

THIRD FARMER (*pulling beard*). Well, the Boston and Maine ain't what it used to be when I was a boy—it never came then. (*Chuckles.*)

(*Shrill railroad whistle.*)

FIRST FARMER (*after pause*). Good Lord! what's happened? She must be on time.

(*All the FARMERS rush to the porch and then begin running down road.*)

THIRD FARMER (*outside*). So-long, Isry—don't forget what we told yuh. So-long!

(*ISRY stands for a moment on porch then returns to C.*)

ISRY. I want to know! What right have the women folks got to interfere with my selling liquor in this here town if I so prefer? If it warn't for me their men folks would be goin' down to Boston every other day and bringin' back all sorts of hard drinks. Now they get just what they want, reasonable price. Everything going fine, when all of a sudden Francesca Willetts has a visit from her Aunt Edwina, reformer, socialist and the Lord knows what else. The next day, by Jingo! Hamden's Reform League comes into existence, the next day a meeting in the town hall, next the school has a holiday, all to discuss Wimen's Rights and Social Reform. (*He opens cash drawer, extracting a few dollars and goes to door at c.*) Jumping Crickets! let 'em have their rights, but they can't take mine away, not by a durn sight. (*Regards money.*) Business poor to-day, I reckon, but it will be a heap sight poorer if I can't sell my whiskey. (*Glances out door.*) Wal! guess it's safe now. They all be down at the station watching the choo-choo come in. Some education watching that choo-choo come in. (*He returns to counter and by means of a string lowers rubber boot to floor. He then puts bills into it, chuckling to himself and raises it to its former position.*) Right smart place to hide it, I'm a-thinkin'. Where no thieves can break through and steal. Wal! I guess I'll go down to the station and get the mail. (*Shouts.*) Oh, Eddy! Oh, Eddy! (*Outside, EDDY RIAS replies, "Commin', Isry—commin'."*) Going to get the mail; tend store, Eddy. [*Exit, c.*]

*Enter EDDY, L., reading town paper.*

EDDY. Wal, between the Women's Reform League and startling robberies by Nine-Fingered Pete and the mysterious selling of intoxicating liquors, Hamden's gettin' to be some burg, and to add to this a stranger's been staying at the inn. First guest they had for a long time but still he seems sort of a harmless guy. (*ANDREW STRONG appears on porch.*) Hulloo! Speak of the devil and he appears.

*Enter STRONG, c.*

STRONG. Hulloo! Is Mr. Ebbetts at home?

EDDY. No, down at the station, I'm a-thinkin'.

STRONG. My name's Strong, Andrew Strong from Portland.

EDDY. That's strange.

STRONG. What's strange?

EDDY (*lighting pipe*). Nothing save your bein' all the way from Portland. Ninety miles—powerful distance.

STRONG (*very excited*). Is every one down at the station?

EDDY. Yes.

STRONG. When will they be back?

EDDY. Five or six minutes, I suspect.

STRONG (*emphasis*). That's too bad—not long enough.

EDDY (*surprised*). Hey?

STRONG (*putting his hand on EDDY's arm*). I've been watching you for a week and you're not a bad sort. (*Suddenly*.) Rias, I want you to help me carry out a little scheme.

EDDY. Me?

STRONG. Exactly! There's a chance for a fortune if we only use discretion and caution. In the first place, this Isry Ebbetts's pretty close, isn't he? Says he's poor as mud, doesn't he?

EDDY. You bet! Why, he said the other day sort of confidential like if the Lusitannia was selling for two cents, he couldn't even buy a gangplank.

STRONG. That's what I thought. Kind of treated you bad, ain't he?

EDDY (*bewildered*). Jumping crickets! Who be yuh?

STRONG. Strong, Andrew Strong; but that's neither here nor there.

EDDY. It ain't?

STRONG. No. But to get down to it; you've heard about Isry Ebbetts' grandfather, Ebenezer, one of the richest farmers that ever lived?

EDDY. Sure.

STRONG. And you've probably heard that when he died there wasn't a cent to be found. Think of it, Eddy, all his money hidden somewhere and not a soul knew where it was. You remember that —

EDDY. Yes—yes. I remember. They took down every blessed stone and plank in this here house, trying to find it; at least so my father said they did.

STRONG. Did they?

EDDY. They did!

STRONG. Well, to make a long story short, my father bought an old-fashioned sideboard from Isry's father after the old man had died. Do you get me?

EDDY (*very excited*). Yes, yes, you were saying —



STRONG (*calmly*). Yes, I was saying—(*slowly*) in that side-board —

EDDY (*quickly*). Was the treasure.

STRONG. No !

EDDY. It wa'n't ?

STRONG. No ! But concealed in a secret drawer was a piece of paper which told exactly where it was.

EDDY. Where was it ? I'll be durned ! Where is it ?

STRONG. Slowly now, slowly. On this piece of paper was a full description of how to find the Ebbetts fortune. Now, I've run myself into debt up town and my father's cut me off. Do you get me ?

EDDY. Sure pop ! I ain't no fool.

STRONG. Now, of course the treasure is mine—ours, if we find it. But old Isry Ebbetts would be sure to raise some rumpus if we took it out from under his very nose, wouldn't he ?

EDDY. You bet ! A devil of a rumpus.

STRONG. So—we must get that treasure without his knowing it; see ?

EDDY. Sure ! But when ?

STRONG. To-night ! Meet me here at five minutes after twelve and we'll get that treasure. (*Suddenly.*) Half and half. I couldn't give you more than half.

EDDY. Of course not, Andrew ; you're doing fair all right. At twelve-five I'll meet you outside the store and we'll enter by that window (*pointing*), but don't make no noise ; the old man sleeps next door.

STRONG. Fine. I'll be here. (*Going.*)

EDDY. Say, how much will thar be in that treasure ?

STRONG. I should say, on a rough guess, ten or fifteen thousand.

EDDY (*falling into chair*). My Gawd ! What would Isry say ?

(*Sound of voices.*)

STRONG. Good gracious ! Buck up ; some one's coming. Buck up, can't you ? Regain your poise, or we're lost. Don't you hear ? (*He pulls out silver flask and pours contents down EDDY's open mouth.*) Come to, can't yuh ? You look like a ghost.

EDDY (*smacking lips*). Say ! that beats Isry's whiskey all to pieces. (*Examines flask.*) Say ! but this is some flask. My ! "A." "S." ; what's that ?

STRONG. My initials, A. S.—Andrew Strong. Come to, old boy; some one is coming. Quick! (*He pulls him from counter, R., leaving flask on counter.*) Act natural now. Look as if I was buying something. (*He throws him over counter, L., just as FRANCESCA WILLETS and EDWINA BEMIS enter C. They proceed R. STRONG meanwhile endeavors to save situation by talking.*) That's it—no, no. That one there. They fit me like a dream. You're right; my father always did smoke them. (*Wipes brow.*) Precisely; my great-great-grandmother recommended them—Pippin. (*EDDY stares in amazement.*) Hey! What's the matter? Give me a Pippin cigar; they always —

EDDY. Kill—kill—kill.

STRONG (*angry*). What?

EDDY. Mosquitoes; at least, so Isry says.

STRONG. Say —! (*Notices ladies.*) Yes, yes, give me five.

EDDY (*handing him two bottles*). So-long! Come again.

STRONG (*seizing bottles*). We're lost! [*Exit C., angrily.*]

FRAN. (*aside to EDW.*). This is the place, Edwina.

EDW. (*aside to FRAN.*). It certainly looks it. Let me tell you, we'll get to the bottom of this affair if it takes all year. This town is prohibition, and prohibition it will remain. (*Sniffs.*) 'Pon my soul!—Do you —do you —

FRAN. Do I what? Tell me, do I what?

EDW. Yes, we're in the right place. Can't you smell it, Francesca? The aroma is quite noticeable.

FRAN. (*sniffing*). Heavens! Now that you speak of it, it quite overcomes me.

EDDY (*endeavoring to attract attention by a fearful cough; both ladies start and assume frigid attitude*). Be yuh wantin' anything, Francesca?

FRAN. No, thank you, we're waiting for the mail. (*Aside to EDW.*) Did you notice how queerly they was a-actin' when we come in? I calculate they was a-drinkin'.

(EDDY sleeps in rear.)

EDW. (*sniffing near flask*). I should say so; the aroma is terrible. We must wait no longer! Hamden's Social Reform Leaders must step to the front. I will lead, accompanied by you, my noble staff and body-guard. First, we must get proof, and then when the culprits are caught, run them out of town, tarred and feathered. Then think of our fame, think of the

power Woman Suffrage will receive by this masterful stroke! Think! Think!

FRAN. (*breathlessly*). Yes, I am, I am.

EDW. Think of the names of Hamden's Women Reformers standing forever as martyrs for sex and reform! Think of it, Francesca!

FRAN. Glorious! Glorious!

*Enter ISRY, carrying mail bag. Crowd of FARMERS begin to collect on porch. ISRY goes into partition marked "Post-Office" and begins to sort mail.*

ISRY (*thrusting head through window*). Mornin', Francesca.

FRAN. Morning, Isry.

ISRY. Mornin', madame.

EDW. Huh! (*ISRY quickly disappears. To FRAN.*) There he is, the demon behind the scenes, breaking the laws laid down by the people, ruining our men folks, bringing an atmosphere of filth about our children by selling intoxicating liquors to a bunch of weak-minded men. How can we catch him red-handed? Think! Think!

FRAN. (*suddenly*). Edwina! (*Pause.*)

EDW. What?

FRAN. How can we?

EDW. Huh! Ah! I have it! We will come here to-night at eleven-thirty, hide in the post-office and catch the villain at his diabolical work.

FRAN. Glorious! (*Sees ISRY.*) Any mail?

ISRY. None to-day.

EDW. Come, let us go, Francesca.

EDW. } Good-day. [*Exeunt C., bowing to group.*  
FRAN. }

*Enter THOMAS RUSTAN and THIRD FARMER; they advance forward.*

RUSTAN. Just wait till the old skinflint gets that letter. That will take him off his perch.

THIRD FARMER. I want to know! Tell me, Thomas, what's the joke?

RUSTAN. Wal, you know about the robberies around these parts by Nine-Fingered Pete? Well, I just wrote Isry a letter, saying that the Nine-Fingered one, along with the rest of his gang, would make away with all his concealed cash at ten minutes past twelve to-night.

THIRD FARMER. Ho-ho! Honest Injun? Well, I swan! I guess that will give a right smart scare, but still Isry's pretty clever.

(RUSTAN *passes to office and receives mail and exits c.*  
FARMERS *follow his example until the stage is empty save for ISRY and EDDY. ISRY comes from behind post-office opening letter.*)

ISRY. A letter for me. Ain't many I get these days. Must be somethin' queer. Hulloo! What's this? (*Reads.*) "To Mr. Isry Ebbetts. Knowing you to be the proud possessor of the Ebbetts fortune, we take the liberty of informing you that we will relieve you of said fortune to-night at twelve-ten. Thanking you in advance—Yours, Nine-Fingered Pete." Wal, I swan! (*His eye wanders to rubber boot and then with a start to sleeping EDDY.*) Eddy! Eddy!

EDDY (*awaking*). Yes, yes, of course. Pippins. Certainly Pippins. By all means, Pippins. They kill, they kill—they ki—— Wal, I'll be jiggered. Pardon me, Isry, I was a-dreamin'.

(ISRY, *who has approached him, falls back, his hands raised in horror.*)

ISRY. Eddy!

EDDY. Yes, Isry, what's the matter?

ISRY. Matter! You've been a-drinkin' my whiskey.

EDDY. Sir!

ISRY. Do you deny it? Do you deny it? Your breath belies your words. Go! (*Points door.*) You are discharged. By Jingo! Eddy Rias, this is a bad beginning of your career, stealing your employer's whisk—property. I can't overlook it; not by a durn sight. You are discharged. (*Suddenly waves letter.*) And come to think of it, be you that fathead who thought to scare me by this letter? Be yuh?

EDDY (*bewildered*). Me, sir! What do you mean?

ISRY. I mean—I mean the joker will pay for this. Now, go! Don't you hear? Go! You are discharged; go!

(EDDY *exits R. as* ARCHENBACHUS HERODOTUS SNOOZE *enters. ISRY, overcome with anger, turns and beholds SNOOZE.*)

SNOOZE (*allowing ISRY's surprise to subside*). Ebbetts?

ISRY. Yes, that's who I be. (SNOOZE *presents card and while ISRY inspects it, begins a tour of the room, inspecting every article. ISRY reads.*) "Archenbachus Herodotus Snooze, Member of Pinkum's Select Crime Hunters. Telephone 5732 Haymarket." Hulloo! You're a detective, hey?

SNOOZE. Precisely; your deduction is correct. I'm with Pinkum's this year. Known to my friends as Hangaround Snooze, nicknamed Catch-em-sure.

ISRY. No doubt you do.

SNOOZE (*still on tour*). I'm here for two purposes, Ebbetts.

ISRY. Indeed; what may they be?

SNOOZE (*on L.*). The first is to enjoy a little rest amidst the cool enchanting climate of Hamden. (*He sees flask on counter. Picks it up quickly. Aside.*) His monogram, no doubt. (*Smells it.*) Scotch or Rye—Scotch. (*He then quickly places it in his pocket.*) Ah!

ISRY (*turning*). Eh!

SNOOZE (*yawning*). Ah! The second purpose as I was saying is to run down a criminal of the worst type (*slowly*), a seller of intoxicating liquor, a demon dealer in Scotch. This monster of iniquity I have already found.

ISRY. Who be he, Mr. Snooze, if I might inquire?

SNOOZE (*very dramatic*). You!

ISRY. Me?

SNOOZE. Yes, you. My proof is complete. My good man, sorry as I —

ISRY. Eh! Your proof, your proof?

SNOOZE. Is your flask found in this room, with your initials inscribed on it, filled with vile grogs of Scotch. Pretty fine, eh? Twelve minutes off the train and the case is complete. Isry Ebbetts, whiskey smuggler, nabbed by Archenbachus Herodotus Snooze. I can almost see it in print.

ISRY. Not so fast, Mr. Snooze, not so fast. Let's see that flask with my initials.

SNOOZE (*producing flask*). Here's your flask.

ISRY (*examining it carefully*). Hulloo! What's this? Monogram A. S. (*Pause.*) Archenbachus Snooze. Wal, I'll be durned; tried to scare me, hey? Pull out your own flask and try to prove it's mine. Say, you be some detective.

SNOOZE (*taken aback*). It must be somebody's; it's not mine. A. S.; that's queer. (*Regains poise.*) Come now, Ebbetts, I've nothing against you. I see we're going to be

great friends. But that flask belonged to some one of your customers. Must have, you know, if it was laying where I found it. Now just between you and I and the wall, who was it?

ISRY. I don't know. I don't know.

SNOOZE (*drawing out ten dollar bill without letting ISRY see it and dropping it directly behind him*). Now, say, who was it? You're state's evidence; no harm to you, I assure you. Who was it?

ISRY. Couldn't say, couldn't say.

SNOOZE (*gazing at the ceiling*). Say, you dropped something, didn't you? It's not mine.

ISRY (*looking around and seeing bill*). You say it ain't yours?

SNOOZE (*winking at ISRY*). No, it ain't mine.

ISRY (*slowly taking out wallet and counting bills, he then picks up SNOOZE's bill and puts it in his wallet*). Then it must be mine. Much obliged, Snooze. I'd 'a' lost it if it hadn't been for you.

SNOOZE (*winking at ISRY*). Yes.

ISRY. Yes—but thanks to you I found it. Wal, it's time to close store, Snooze, so I'll have to ask you to go. So-long, Snooze. (*Pockets flask.*)

SNOOZE. What!

ISRY. So-long, Snooze; good-day.

SNOOZE (*raising hands in horror*). Damnation. (*Retreats to c.*) You'll pay for this, Ebbetts. Archenbachus Herodotus Snooze never forgets. Never. [*Exit.*]

ISRY (*putting wallet into pocket with a smile of satisfaction and then extracting silver flask, he extracts his wallet and pats it, looks at boot over his head and murmurs*). Not so bad, Isry, not so bad.

## CURTAIN

## ACT II

SCENE.—*The same, at night. The moon shines in through windows on right, making it quite light. The doors are closed and white sheets are thrown over the counters, giving a ghostly atmosphere.*

(FRAN. and EDW. are discovered behind counter of post-office.)

EDW. Ah! My dear, tiresome as this may seem, I cannot help feeling our watch will be rewarded and our purpose accomplished, and then think of our glory, think of how the women of Hamden will be admired by all good women of the world, and last but not least think of the shattered tyranny of Hamden's males. Their banners rent, defeated and vanquished by you and I, representing Hamden's Reform League. Think of the demon, Isry Ebbetts, riding tarred and feathered out of Hamden amidst the cheers of the excited populace.

FRAN. Glorious.

EDW. Glorious! It will be modern history acted and blended on the little stage of Hamden. (*During the following speeches EDW. and FRAN. become more and more sleepy.*) Ah, ho! Sleepy is no name for it, but our interest must not wane for a moment. The night hawks may be here at any moment to fill themselves with old red eye Ebbetts' filthy whiskey and we must meet them as the women of Hamden would have us with —

FRAN. Glory.

EDW. No, no, with valor and spirit. Drive them away, seize the whiskey for evidence, handcuff Ebbetts. Ah, ho! (*Yawns.*) Glorious, is it not? Alas! a little nap could do no harm; any noise however slight would be perceptible to our trained ears. (*FRAN. sleeps.*) To-morrow our fame is spread, to-morrow the world will know, to-morrow the day of dreams.

(*Sleeps. Soon RUSTAN appears at window and then quickly enters C. He carries bundle. After looking cautiously about, he proceeds to door L. and listens.*)

RUSTAN. Wal, I guess it will turn out all right, unless I'm nabbed before I get away. It's kind of dangerous coming into the store here but it was too good a joke to let go by. If that letter made any impression on Isry, and it ought to, because he makes lots of money with his store and selling of liquors and never was he known to put one cent in the bank. Consequently, it must be somewheres around; may be in this very room; who knows? (*He unwraps bundle, extracting a sign on which is printed, "Nine-Fingered Pete." Placing a stool under rubber boot, he substitutes this new sign in place of the one marked "Good Luck."*) Wal, I calculate that ought to catch the old flint's eye when it roams about. (*He gets down off chair placing it where he found it. Then he places the old sign over the door-knob of the main entrance.*) Guess this will cause some talk around Hamden; if they don't blame Nine-Fingered Pete, the ghosts will have done it, so there will be excitement either way. I guess I'd better go now and come back later and see if anything happens. If it don't, the old red eye's slipped one over on me again, gosh darn him.

[*Exit, c.*

(*Silence, broken by sighs from FRAN. and EDW. Tinkering with window, R. It opens.*)

STRONG. We're early.

EDDY (*outside*). So we be, Strong. So we be.

(*EDDY and STRONG creep through window. STRONG carries electric torch.*)

STRONG. Seems all right.

EDDY. Yes, but appearances be deceitful, especially when your appearances aren't appreciated.

STRONG. Hush! Don't talk; if we get found here, we're lost.

EDDY. You don't say? I should think we would be found, not lost. (*Snores.*)

STRONG. Shs-s-s! I thought I heard a noise.

EDDY. So you did. You heard my teeth; they're rattling to beat jumping crickets.

STRONG. Come, we mustn't lose time. Go to the old man's door and listen.

EDDY. Sure pop! But you don't suppose there's any



danger, do yuh? (*Creeps cautiously to door and listens. Shouts back.*) Seems all right.

STRONG. Shut up! Not so much noise. Haven't you any sense? Now to business. (*They both advance toward foot-lights.*) Remember if we're caught, every man for himself.

EDDY. You bet. I won't forget that, not by a darn sight.

STRONG (*taking out scrap of paper*). Here are the directions for finding the treasure of Isry's grandfather. Now listen carefully and absorb each item. Do you understand?

EDDY. Sure.

STRONG. Pay attention to what it says and follow me in every movement. (*Reads.*) "To find the fortune of Ebenezer Ebbetts." Are you listening?

EDDY. Sure pop! I ain't deaf.

STRONG. Then it says a little below, "One good turn deserves another." What do you suppose that means?

EDDY. I don't know. It probably means that if we do a — No, it can't be that; ain't possible.

STRONG. What ain't possible?

EDDY. What I was thinking.

STRONG. What was that?

EDDY. Why—er—wal, I don't exactly know. But supposin' you and I were blood relations and Isry was our common enemy, then if he should do us no good, then —

STRONG. Shucks! You ain't saying anything.

EDDY. I knowed it. That's my point; it don't mean nothing.

STRONG. Come now, Rias, we can't afford to go off on any geometric tangent. You understand?

EDDY (*bewildered*). Sure.

STRONG. We can't lose time. (*Reads.*) "Stand directly under the chandelier in the west room and pace five steps to the right." This is the west room; now where is that chandelier?

EDDY (*pointing to boot*). Thar.

STRONG. You call that a chandelier?

EDDY. No. But it's where one used to be. (*They stand directly beneath the rubber boot, and with aid of pocket lantern take five steps to the right. Both pause with one foot in air.*) Now what does it say? Darn queer way of gettin' treasure.

STRONG (*reading*). "Face north." (*They face window.*) "Now take five steps right and perceive the omen of good luck." This begins to take on a happy aspect, Eddy.

EDDY. It would if Isry saw us, by Jove! (*They take five steps, which places them directly below D. C.*) I want to know! Where be that lucky omen?

STRONG (*turning light directly on "Good Luck" sign hung on door-knob*). There it is, sure as you're alive.

EDDY. Sweet spirits of nitre, I be a dead man. Say, Andrew, this begins to look real encouraging.

STRONG (*reading*). "From this point, three steps forward and four to the left."

(*They follow directions.*)

EDDY (*suddenly rushing to door and seizing sign*). Say, I just calculate I've seen this before. It used to hang on that lucky rubber boot of Isry's. (*They flash light on boot.*) 'Peers it's still there. Say, what's this? (*Reads.*) "Nine-Fingered Pete."

STRONG (*jumping*). Where?

EDDY. There! He's got here first, I'm a-thinkin'.

STRONG. Eddy, do you—do you think this common town robber has beat us to it and had the nerve to steal that treasure? If he has, we're lost—lost—lost.

EDDY. Come now, old man, our goose ain't pickled, not by a durn sight. Let's follow out directions and see where that gol darn treasure war. Now, where were we?

STRONG (*wandering about stage, followed by EDDY*). Let's see; where were we? We weren't here? No. We were at the lucky sign.

EDDY. Sure, by the omen. (*They approach door.*) And then we were three steps forward and four to the left.

(*They mark this over again.*)

STRONG (*reading*). "Now walk directly north five paces and you will get your first view of the treasure." I've got it; follow me. (*They take five steps to the right. This should land them directly in front of FRAN. and EDW.*) Now we'll get our first view of Ebenezer Ebbetts' golden treasure.

EDDY. Say, ain't this some excitin'?

STRONG. Hush! Watch for that golden treasure.

(*Turns light directly on sleeping countenances of FRAN. and EDW. Pause. STRONG turns in time to catch fainting EDDY.*)

EDDY (*weakly*). Save yourself, old man, save yourself.

(*Recovers.*) Say, that's some treasure, believe me. Gosh! Ain't Isry come yet?

STRONG. Hush! Old man, it's very strange, but they're still asleep. We may get it yet. (*Carefully closes window of post-office.*) My dear fellow, the presence of these females adds zest to our stubborn fight. Come, we must have made a mistake in our direction. Let's do it again.

EDDY. No, you do it; I've had all the treasure-hunting I ever want to see.

STRONG. Come, old man, a little nerve and the victory is ours. Think of some of our great men and the trials they endured on the very verge of success! Think of Blaine!

EDDY (*rising*). You're right. I kind of showed yellow. But say, wa'n't you scared? Just between you and me, sort of confidential like, a sight like that would make me jump in broad daylight, say nothing of darkness.

STRONG. Quick! (*He goes to former position.*) Let me read it again. (*Reads.*) "Now walk directly north five paces and you will get your first view of the treasure."

EDDY. Say, Andrew, I've had enough views of that 'er treasure. Let's find another omen. (*Starts to light pipe.*)

STRONG (*blowing out match*). What are you doing? We'll get pinched yet unless you're careful. (*He takes five paces, which lands him directly beneath rubber boot.*) Now, where's that treasure view?

EDDY. Over there behind counter, I calculate, unless they've moved.

STRONG. Come! Come! I mean where could that treasure be if it were within reach?

EDDY (*eyeing boot*). Might be in that there boot, but it ain't likely.

STRONG. Likely! Why, that's the very place! Get a chair! (EDDY *pulls up chair* and STRONG *stands on it*.) Now, listen! (*Very carefully he rattles boot. Coins clink. Bus. repeated.*) At last! (STRONG *gets down off chair and clasps EDDY's hand.*) Eddy!

EDDY. Andrew!

(*A noise heard off R.*)

STRONG. Eddy!

EDDY. Andrew! Did you hear?

STRONG. Quick, or we're lost!

(*They jump behind counter, L.*)

*Enter ISRY, clad in night-gown and old-fashioned cap and wrapper. He carries candle.*

ISRY. Wal, I swan! I calculate I heard a noise, but maybe I was wrong. But still, some one's playing me a trick to-night, or I'll eat my head.

FRAN. (*behind post-office*). Good gracious, we're surrounded! What shall I do? (*Opens window.*) Land's sake, there's Isry! I must have been asleep. Edwina, awake!

EDW. What? What? Ah! I see him, the cur! What's he doing, Francesca?

FRAN. I suppose he's getting out the whiskey. For once the foul fiend has risen to our bait.

EDW. And our cause shall soon be won; won for Hamden's Reform League. Hush! Watch him!

ISRY. Seems kind of strange not to be selling liquor at this time of night, but it's kind of wise to lay low when the women start a-yelling. They sure can make some racket when they try to. Come to think of it, if that practical joker is going to pull off his burglar joke I wish he'd hurry, 'cause I'm gettin' almighty sleepy. (*Picks up electric torch.*) Jumping Jehosaphat! What's this a-doing here?

STRONG. Curses! We're lost!

EDDY. I wish I was far away. Treasure-hunting ain't such fun as some folks think.

FRAN. Oh, dear! Edwina, he's coming this way!

EDW. No noise, or we're lost! Ain't he acting strange?

ISRY (*eyeing light*). By Jove! This be a burglar's 'lectric torch. Gosh darn it, maybe that letter really was from Nine-Fingered Pete, and he's been here already. (*Sees "Good Luck" sign.*) Huh! What's this —? (*Turns quickly and sees "Nine-Fingered Pete" sign.*) It can't be! No! No! My secret place discovered? All my money stolen? No, it can't be! He couldn't have taken it, couldn't have seen it! No! No! (*Staggers.*)

EDW. Ain't he acting strange, Francesca? He is drunk; absolutely intoxicated!

FRAN. Good gracious, Edwina! Is he really drunk?

(*ISRY moves toward boot.*)

EDDY. }  
STRONG. } We're lost; he is going for the treasure.

ISRY (*his eyes lighting on chair*). Oh! They got it all right. My money, my treasure. I'm lost. Ruined! Lost! Ruined! (*He jumps onto chair sobbing.* EDDY and STRONG rise. FRAN. and EDW. thrust their heads through window. SNOOZE enters, D. C., unobserved. ISRY pulls shoe. It upsets sending a mass of coins and money tumbling down over him. He falls on knees on floor and begins to collect coins.) It's here! Hoo-ray! It's here!

(STRONG and EDDY fall on their knees beside him.)

STRONG. } The treasure!  
EDDY. }

(*During the following scene, all are scrambling for the money.*)

ISRY (*terrified*). Help! Robbers! Thieves! Help! Police!

FRAN. (*seizing ISRY by collar*). Come, you intoxicated villain, I have you!

ISRY. Let me go! My treasure! It's being stolen. Help! Police!

EDDY. My treasure! Help!

STRONG. My treasure! Help!

EDW. Our proof is certain. They are drunk, every blessed one of them. Hamden's Social Reform League has conquered. Help!

ISRY. You villain, Eddy. Let my money be.

EDDY. It's my treasure. I knew it was thar.

ISRY. What! Are you mad? (*Rakes money.*)

STRONG. Sure! He saw it first. (*Rakes money.*)

ISRY. Who are you, you boiled onion? Help! Thieves!

(SNOOZE recovers calm.)

SNOOZE. "In the name of the law."

ISRY. Yes, in the name of the law.

EDDY. It's the law, Andrew.

STRONG. The law! Hooray!

EDW. The police! Our case is complete. Hoo-ray! Officer, arrest these midnight brawlers.

SNOOZE. In the name of the law.

CHORUS. In the name of the law.

ISRY. Eddy, it's going to go hard with you. Give me back my treasure.

EDDY. Your treasure? Bah! My treasure.

ISRY. Everything you say now, Eddy, will be used against yuh. Take care.

EDDY. You can't scare me, not by a durn sight, you old egg.

ISRY. What?

SNOOZE. Silence! (*Pause.*) You are all under arrest.

ISRY. What?

FRAN. } (*surprised*). Us?

EDW. }

STRONG. } Not us?

EDDY. }

SNOOZE (*very dramatic*). All.

CHORUS. What for?

SNOOZE. For buying and selling liquors in a prohibition state; that's what you're arrested for. (*Pulls out revolver.*)

CHORUS. It ain't true.

SNOOZE. Keep quiet! Do you hear?

ISRY. I don't care about that but it's my treasure. Officer, I'll give you —

SNOOZE. Don't bribe an officer of the law; you know what will happen.

ISRY. What?

SNOOZE. He'll accept it.

ISRY. Eddy, stop taking my money. Help! Thieves!

CHORUS. Help! Murder! Thieves!

*Enter FOGGERTY YOUNG waving lantern and blunderbuss.*

ISRY. Ah! Thank goodness, Foggerty, you've come. I'm nearly ruined.

SNOOZE. Who are you?

YOUNG. Who be I?

SNOOZE. Yes, who are you?

YOUNG. I'm the constable of Hamden. As for you, you're all under arrest.

CHORUS. Arrest?

YOUNG (*waving blunderbuss*). Sure pop! You can't fool me. Hurry up.

ISRY. But, Foggerty —

YOUNG. Shut your face, Isry; you're drunk. And after

what the selectmen told you about selling liquors to-night, you'll get yours.

FRAN. } But not us?  
EDW. }

YOUNG. Sure! You, too; and you'll get about six months for this if you get a day.

EDW. Merciful heavens!

EDDY. But I ain't done nothing!

YOUNG. You bet you have, and you'll get about ten years and your partner there will be likely to get life. (*Turns on SNOOZE.*) As for you, you'll get the chair.

SNOOZE. What! My good man, I'm Archenbachus Herodotus Snooze. My card.

YOUNG (*tossing card in air*). That don't do you no good. You're under arrest.

SNOOZE. My dear friend, I —

YOUNG. No soft stuff.

SNOOZE. Mr. Constable, by all the laws of the United States of America, you must inform us on what charge you arrest us?

CHORUS. That's right! What charge?

ISRY. That's right, Foggerty; you can't get around that.

YOUNG. On what charge?

CHORUS. You bet! What charge?

YOUNG. Why — What charge? Let me see. You ain't in no hurry?

SNOOZE. No, indeed. Take your time, old man. I've been in your position many times.

YOUNG. You don't say. (*He goes to stool, where he sits rolling head from side to side.*) Ah! I have it!

CHORUS. What?

YOUNG. I arrest every one in this room for being in an intoxicated condition.

CHORUS. Intoxicated condition?

YOUNG. Yes, I guess that's it.

SNOOZE. But we ain't.

*Enter SQUIRE PECKHAM and FARMERS, C.*

YOUNG. You ain't intoxicated? You say you ain't intoxicated?

CHORUS. We ain't!

SQUIRE (*angrily*). That's a lie. (*General amazement.*)

ISRY. Good gracious ! It's Squire Peckham. Say, squire —

SQUIRE. Not a word. Not one single word. I am ashamed and grieved to learn that you, Isry Ebbetts, of all people, have broken your word to the selectman and sold whiskey to-night.

ISRY. But —

SQUIRE. Not a word from you, Ebbetts ! I won't hear it. Now, as for the rest of you so happily engaged in buying this intoxicating beverage, I blush with shame. You, Edwina Bemis, reformer and prohibitionist, and you, Francesca Willetts, president of the school committee. How could you ? 'Pon my soul ! You too, Foggerty Young, swore to keep peace and order ! This is too much !

CHORUS. But, squire —

SQUIRE. Not a word. Huh ! You too, Eddy Rias ! A fine way to start in your career ! Why don't you follow the example set by the men of worth ?

EDDY. I do ; ain't you one ?

SQUIRE. Hamden considers me such, I believe.

EDDY. But you was a-drinkin' down here last night, squire.

(*Moans from EDW. and FRAN.*)

SQUIRE. Am I to be insulted ?

FARMERS. No !

SQUIRE. Am I, the head of the selectmen, chairman of the town council, to be insulted by such unmitigated liars ?

FARMERS. No !

SQUIRE (*to FARMERS*). I thank you. Now, Joe, let us give our undivided attention to the matter at hand. Take down everybody's name and address. After this see that they are safely lodged in the court-house.

CHORUS. But —

SQUIRE. Not a word ! Your case will be tried to-morrow. Till then keep quiet. (*Notices money.*) Whose money is this ?

EDDY. }

STRONG. } So pleasing you, squire, it's mine.

ISRY. }

SQUIRE. Well, it won't be much longer. If you don't know better than to throw it around on the floor, the town had better confiscate it. George, take care of that whiskey money.

THIRD FARMER. Sure, that's the best thing I do.

ISRY. Jumping crickets ! Can I believe my ears ?



YOUNG. Wal, of all the strange situations I have ever witnessed, this beats 'em all.

ISRY. You're right. There is certainly a mix up somewhere and if I ain't a-dreamin' then I must be awake ; but if I was a-dreamin' then I'd say I was having some dream.

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